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(54) **BEACON SPOOFING PREVENTION**

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(71) Applicant: **Cisco Technology, Inc.**, San Jose, CA (US)

(72) Inventors: **Sean Whitsell**, Chapel Hill, NC (US);
Cullen Jennings, Calgary (CA);
Andrew Biggs, Thornton, CO (US);
Patrick Linskey, San Francisco, CA (US)

(73) Assignee: **Cisco Technology, Inc.**, San Jose, CA (US)

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CPC **H04L 63/1483** (2013.01); **H04L 63/0838** (2013.01); **H04W 4/023** (2013.01); **H04W 64/00** (2013.01)

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See application file for complete search history.

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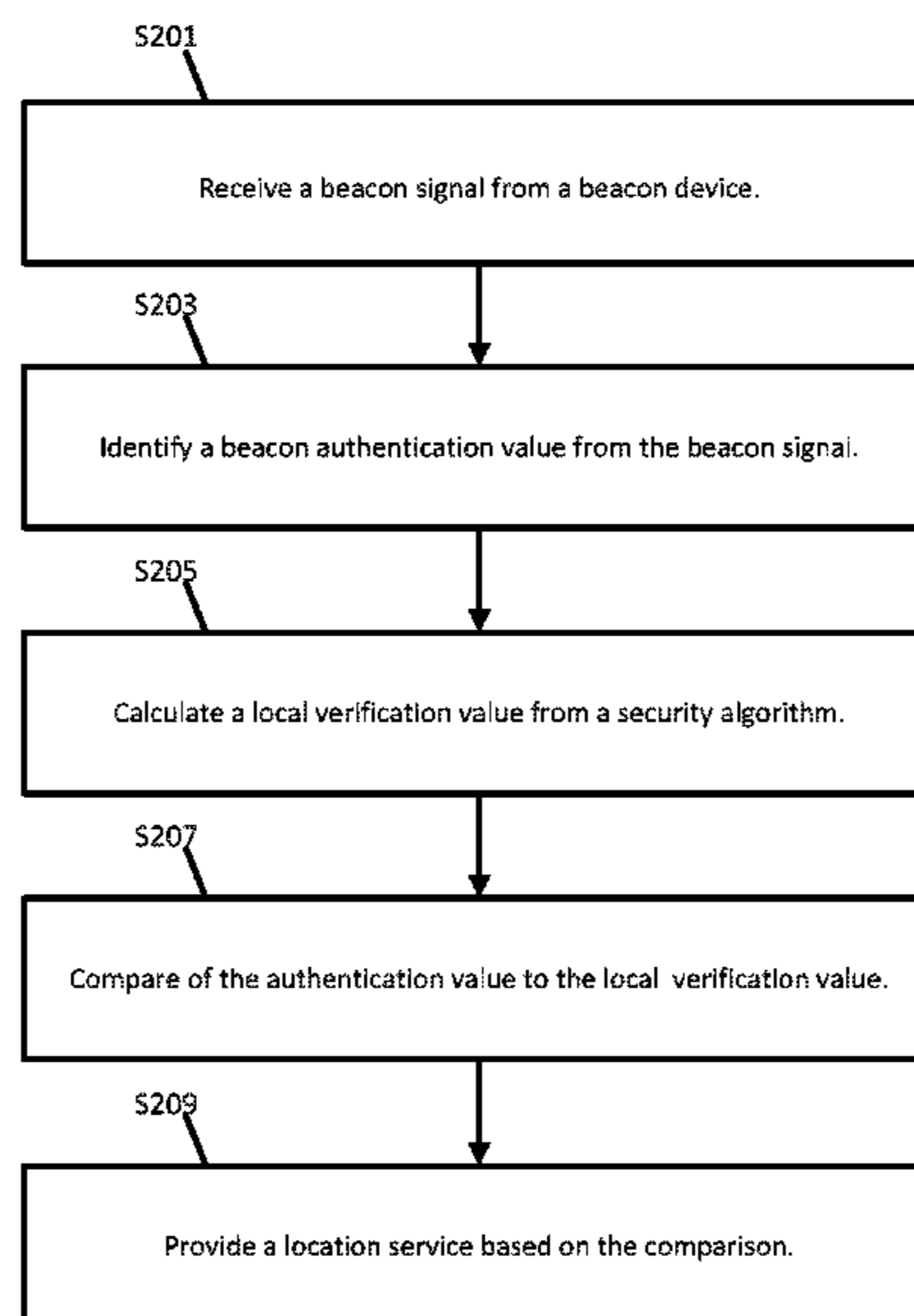
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Primary Examiner — Phy Anh Vu

(57) **ABSTRACT**

In one embodiment, a beacon signal is received from a beacon device. Either a mobile device or a server identifies a beacon authentication value from the beacon signal. Either the mobile device or the server calculates a local verification value from a security algorithm. A comparison of the authentication value to the local verification value is performed, and a location service is provided based on the comparison.

18 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



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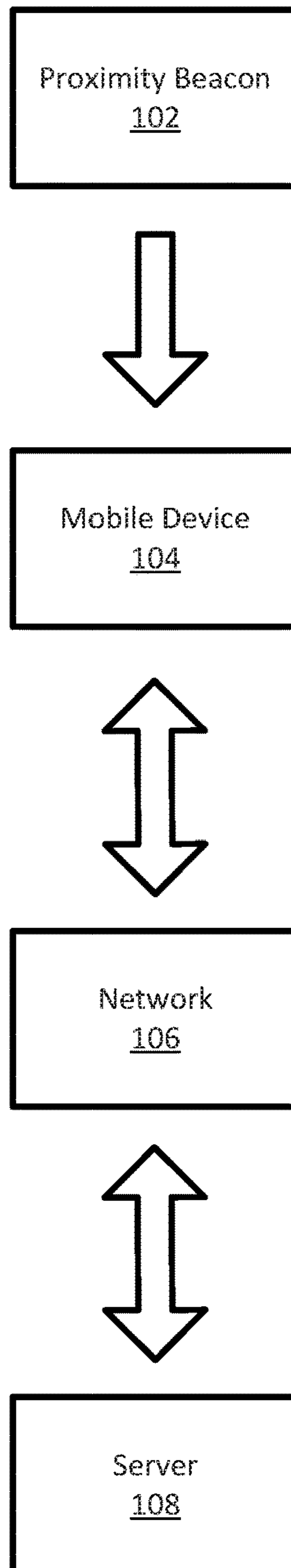


FIG. 1

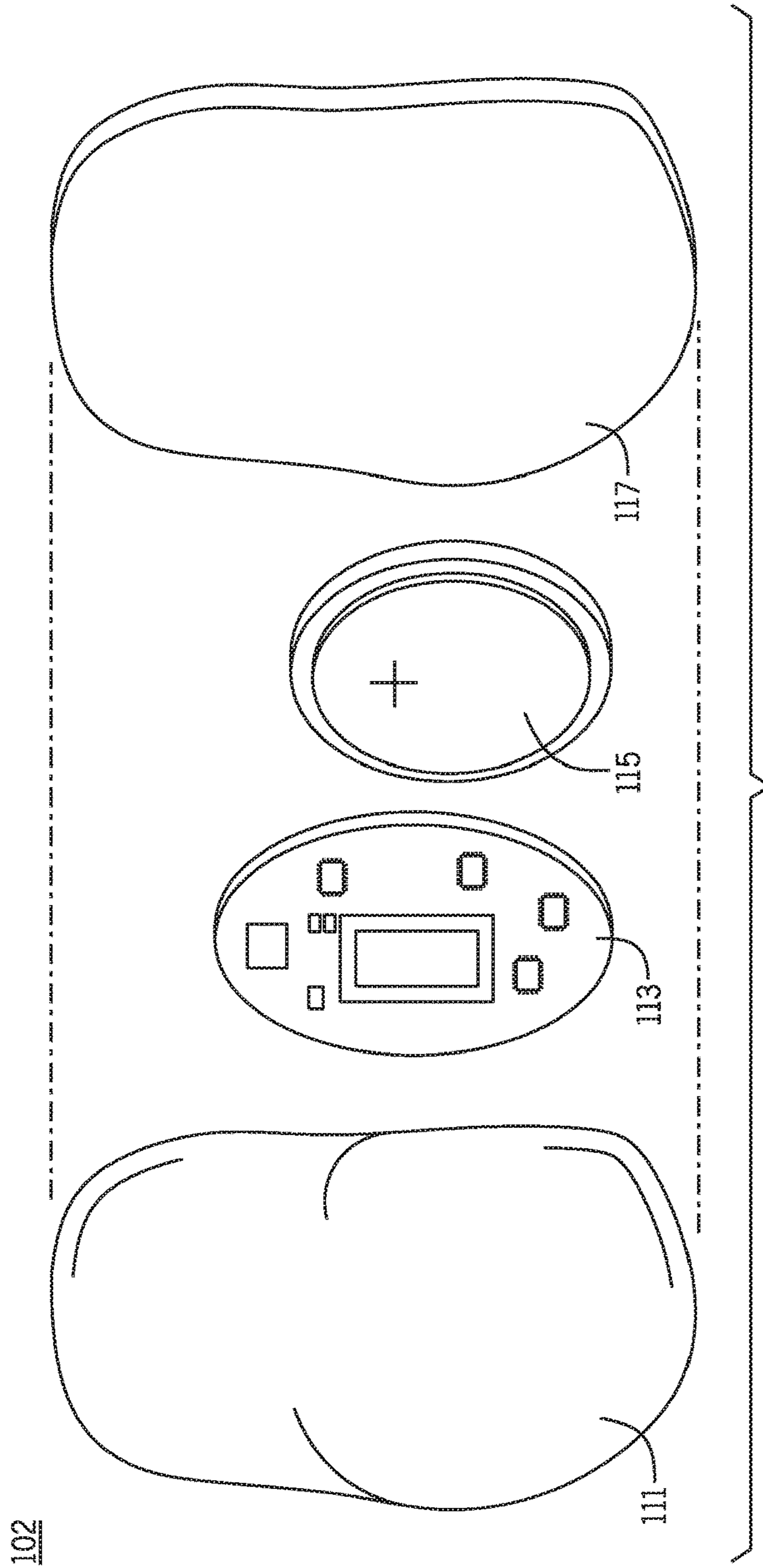


FIG. 2

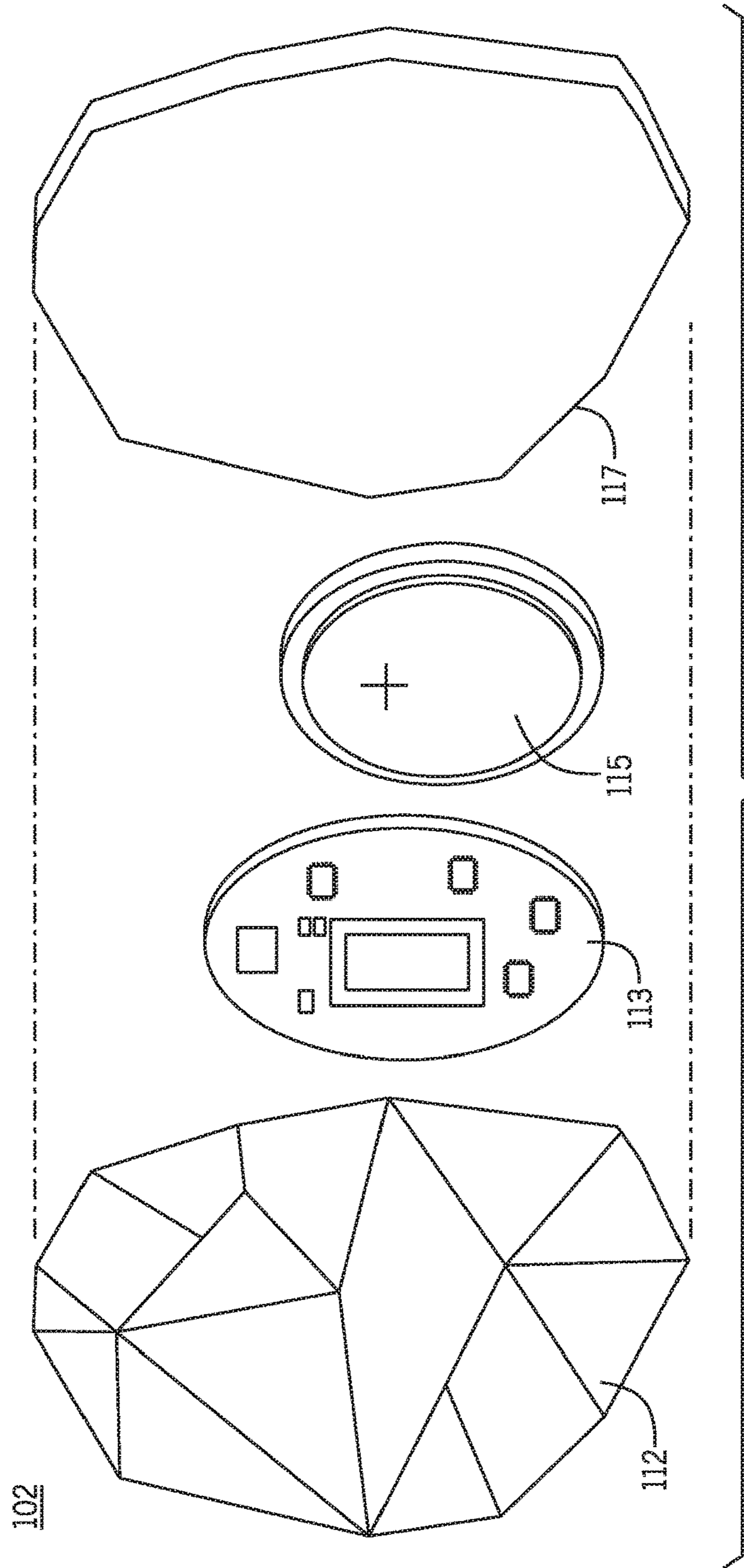
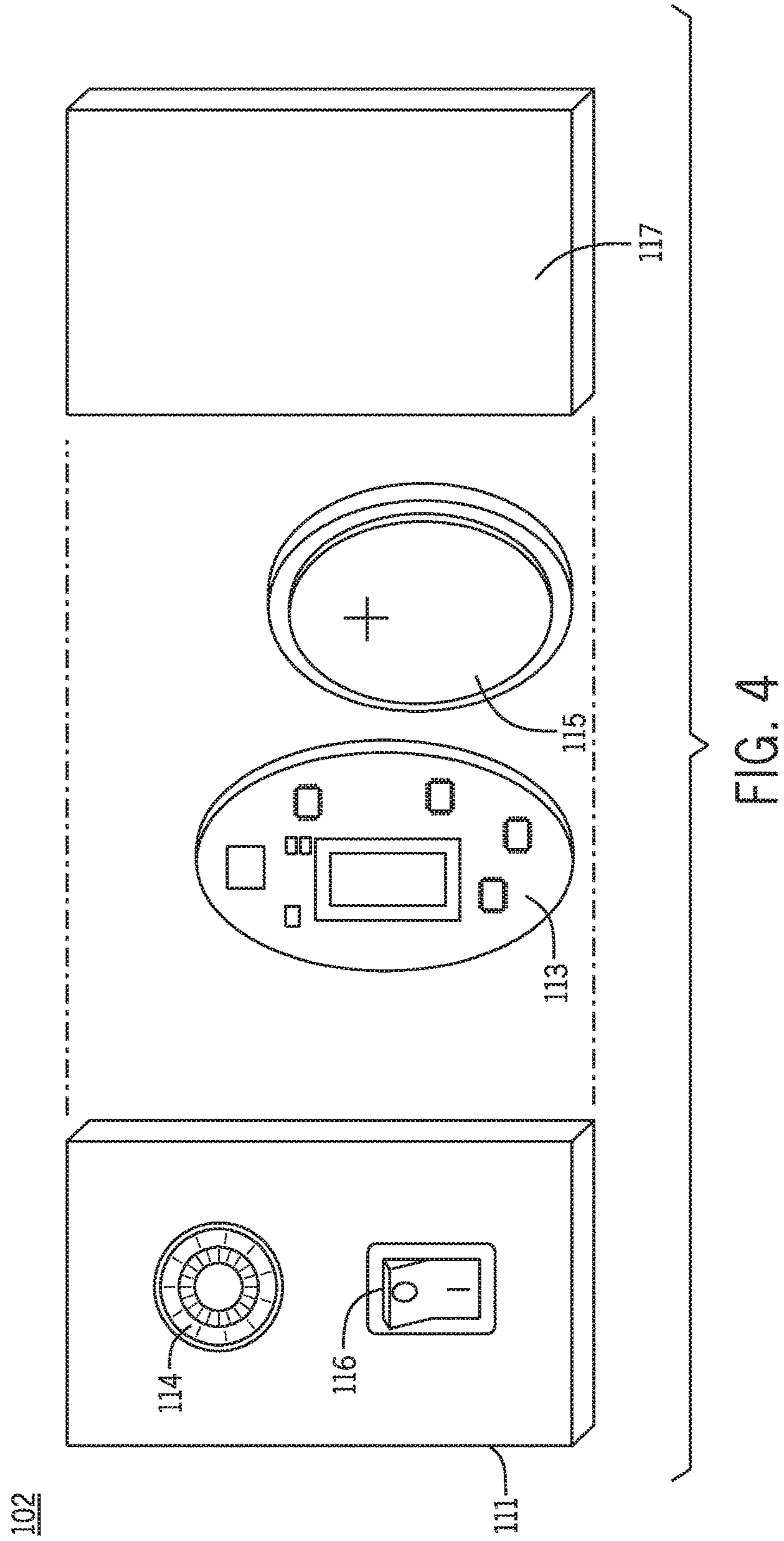


FIG. 3



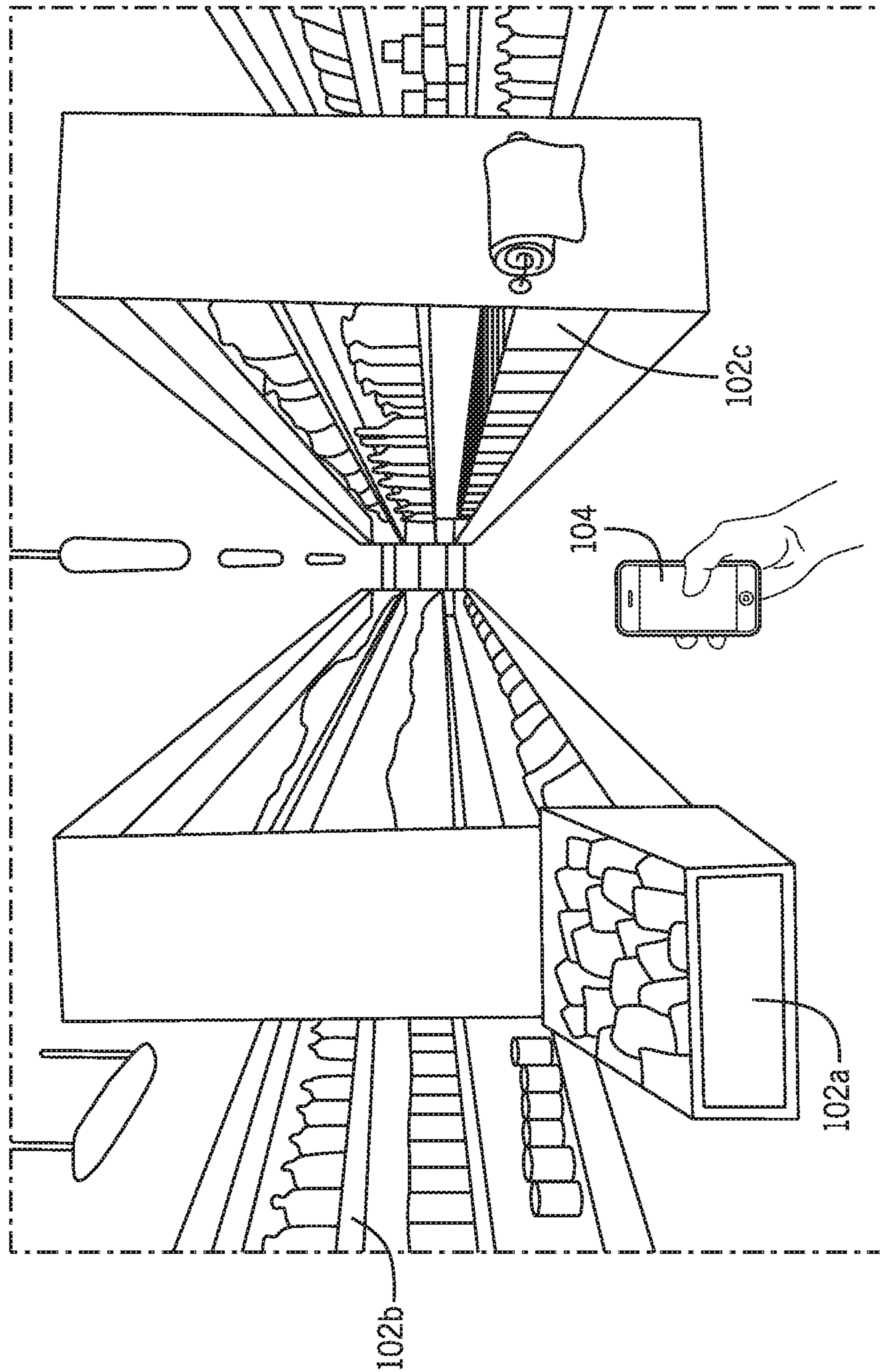


FIG. 5

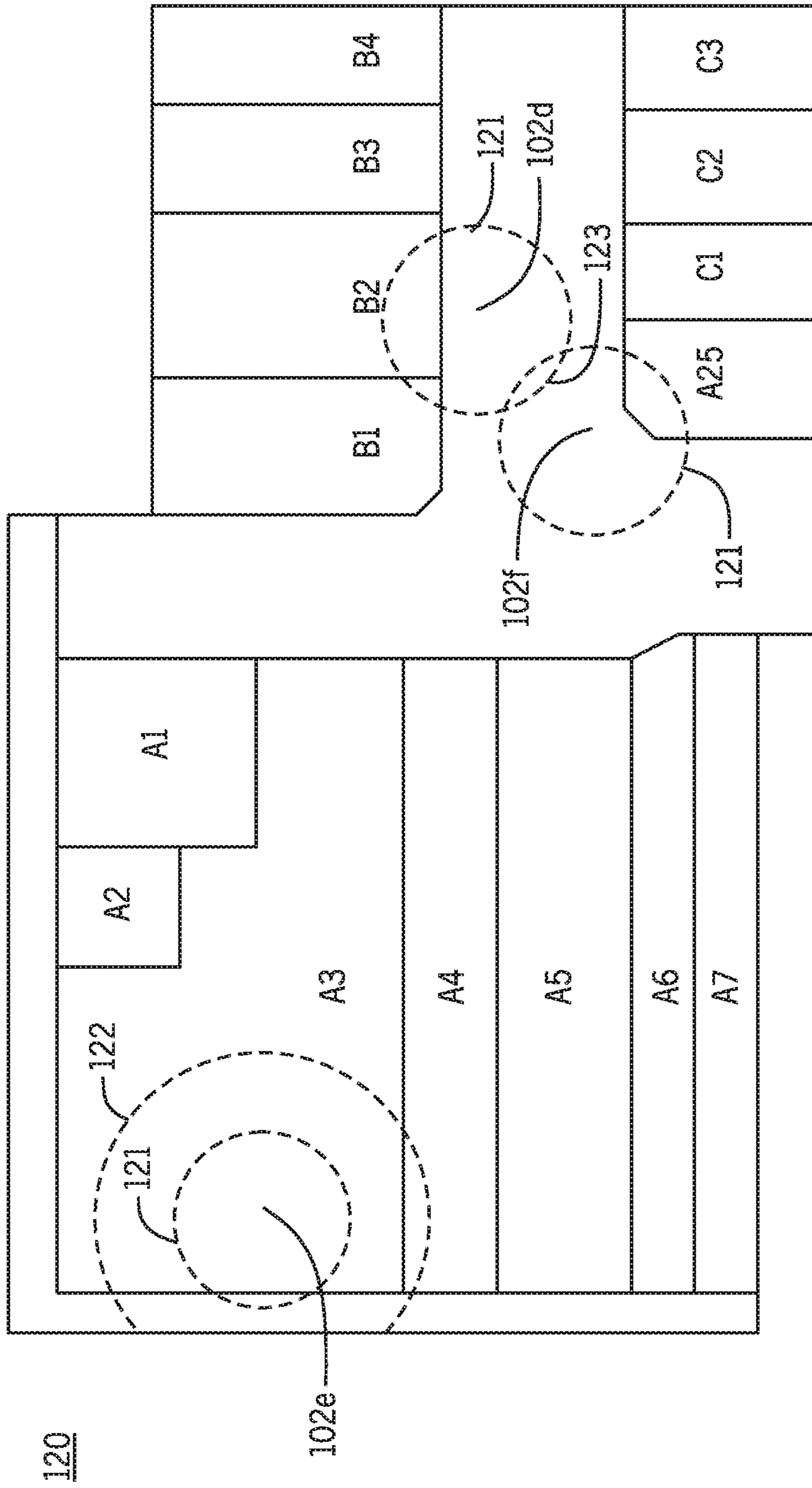


FIG. 6

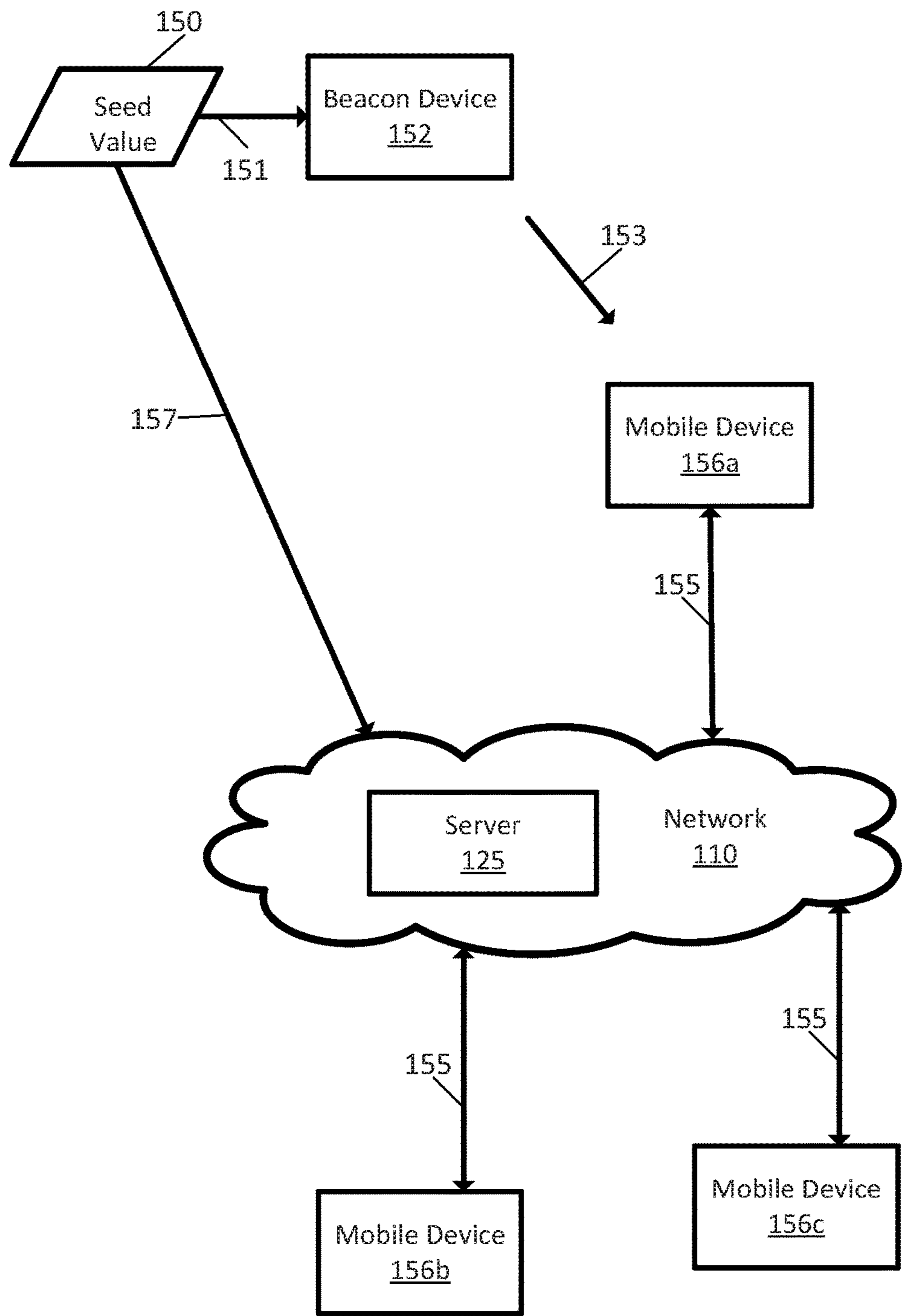


FIG. 7

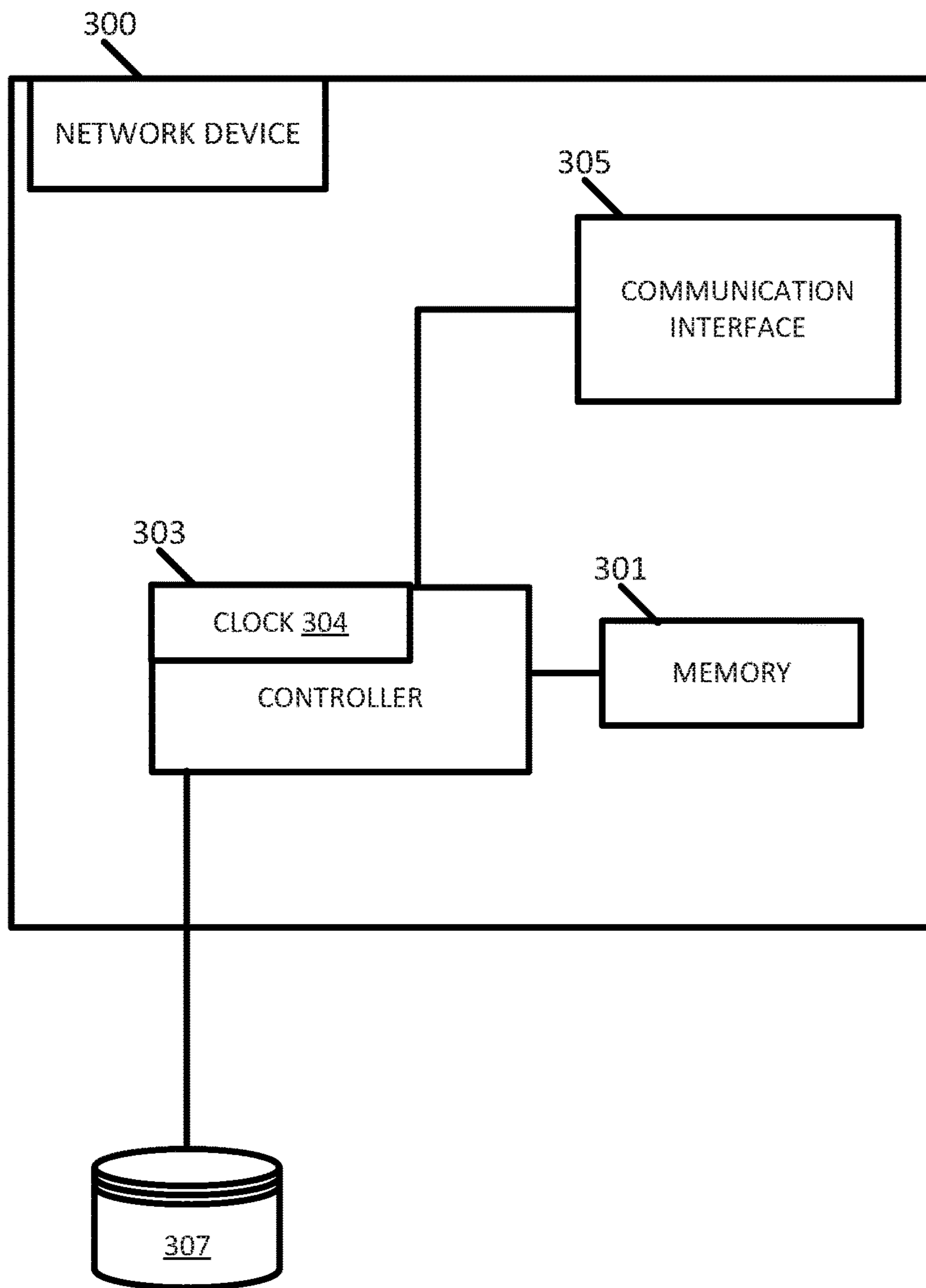


FIG. 8

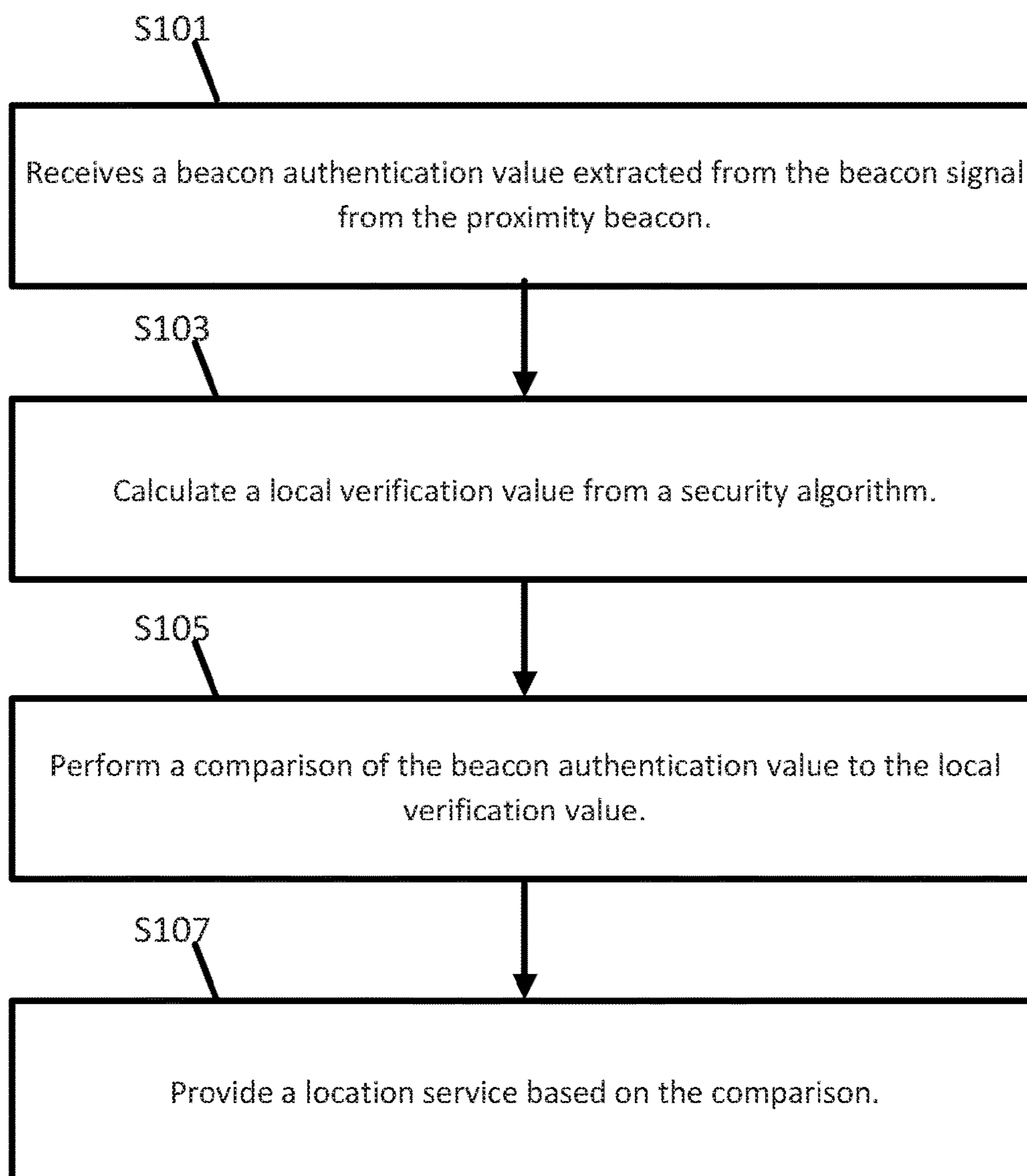


FIG. 9

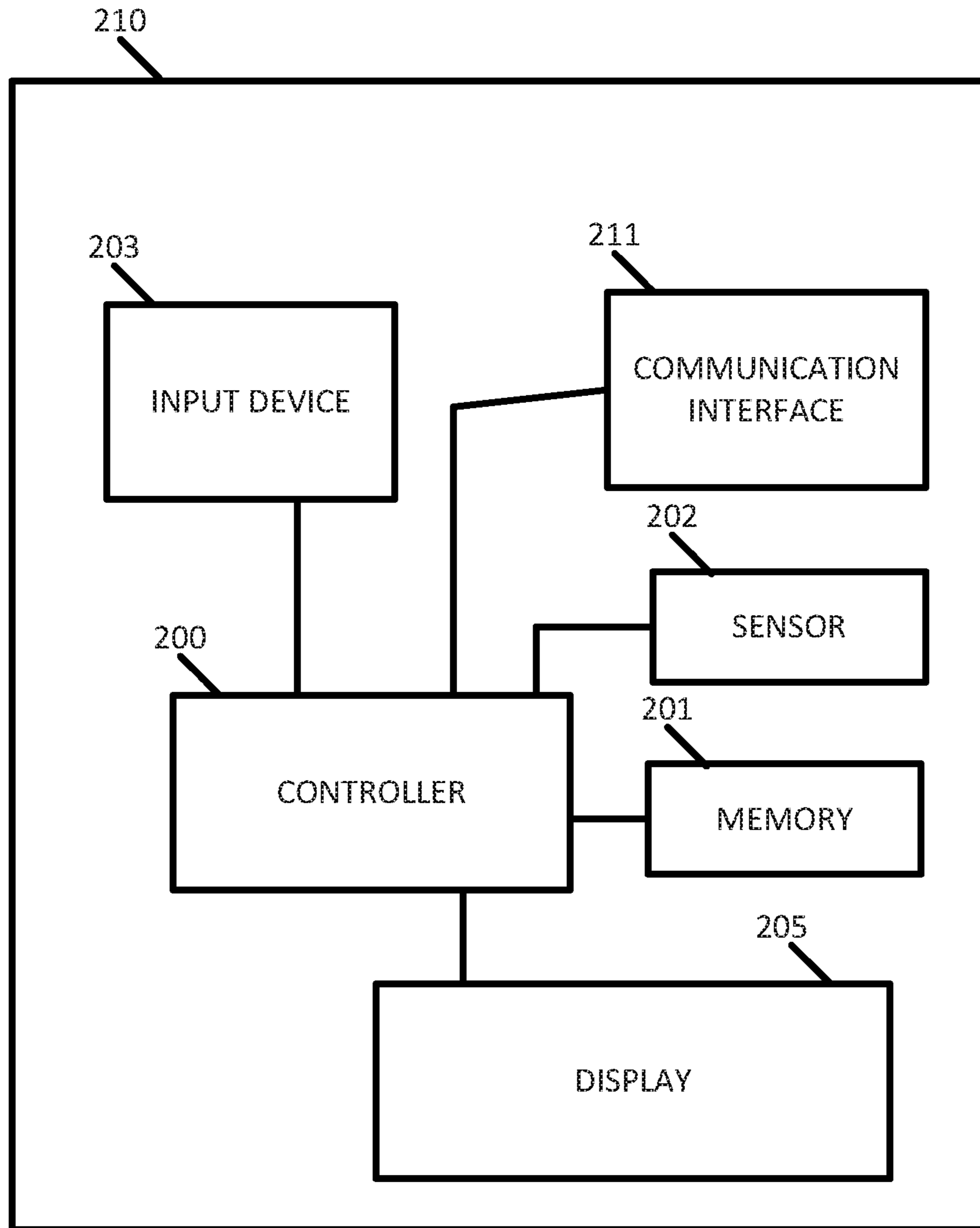


FIG. 10

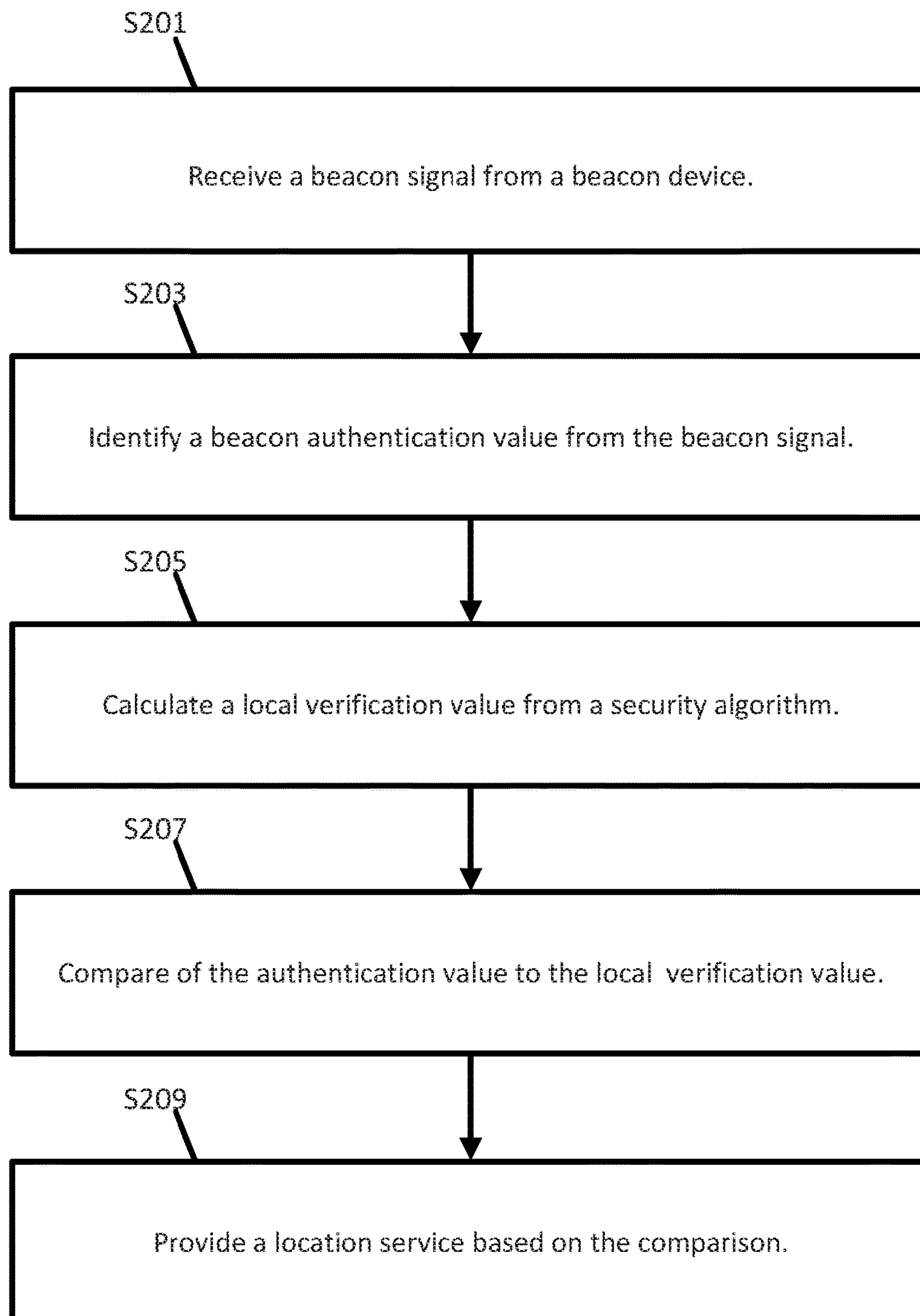


FIG. 11

1**BEACON SPOOFING PREVENTION**

TECHNICAL FIELD

This disclosure relates in general to the field of proximity beacons, and more particularly, to one time passwords for spoofing prevention in proximity beacons.

BACKGROUND

A proximity beacon is a small electronic device that emits a wireless signal that may be detected by electronic devices in the nearby area of the proximity beacon. The proximity beacon may be tied to specific geographic locations or relative locations.

The proximity beacon may push notifications to users in the proximity of the proximity beacon. Advertisements, for example, may be sent to users from a proximity beacon located within or near a store. Alternatively, payments may be triggered through point of sale systems with proximity beacons. Other applications that relate to users being physically near the proximity beacon may be well suited.

The technologies supporting proximity beacons have been developed with low cost and convenience and the forefront, sacrificing security concerns. As a result, proximity beacons may be spoofed by devices that are not actually at the purported physical location. The recorded emitted wireless signal from a proximity beacon may be imitated and re-broadcast at another location by an unauthorized device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Exemplary embodiments of the present embodiments are described herein with reference to the following drawings.

FIG. 1 illustrates an example system for operating a proximity beacon.

FIG. 2 illustrates an example proximity beacon.

FIG. 3 illustrates another example proximity beacon.

FIG. 4 illustrates another example proximity beacon.

FIG. 5 illustrates an example retail setting for proximity beacons.

FIG. 6 illustrates an example floor plan for proximity beacons.

FIG. 7 illustrates an example network for proximity beacons.

FIG. 8 illustrates an example network device for preventing spoofing of proximity beacons.

FIG. 9 illustrates an example flowchart for the network device of FIG. 8.

FIG. 10 illustrates an example endpoint device for communication with one or more proximity beacons.

FIG. 11 illustrates an example flowchart using the endpoint device of FIG. 10.

DESCRIPTION OF EXAMPLE EMBODIMENTS

Overview

In an embodiment, a method includes receiving a beacon authentication value derived from a beacon signal emitted from a beacon device, calculating a local verification value from a security algorithm, and performing a comparison of the beacon authentication value to the local verification value. A location service based on the comparison.

In an embodiment, a beacon authentication value is generated from a seed value and a clock. A beacon signal

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including the beacon authentication value and a unique identifier is sent from a beacon device. The beacon authentication value is compared to a local verification value from a security algorithm at an administrative server for the beacon device, and a location service is unlocked based on the comparison.

Example Embodiments

A beacon device or a proximity beacon is a small electronic device that emits a wireless signal that may be detected by electronic devices in the nearby area of the proximity beacon. The beacon device may utilize one-way communication. The one-way communication may be radio frequency identification (RFID) in which the data is encoded by a coil of wire that creates a magnetic field or ultrasound pairing in which the data is modulated on a ultrasound signal. The beacon device may utilize a low power ad hoc wireless protocol such as Bluetooth Low Energy. Because of the low power requirements, the beacon device may operate for months or years on a small coin cell battery. One or more user devices may receive the wireless signal from the beacon device. The wireless signal includes data indicative of the identity of the beacon device and/or the location of the beacon device. The proximity beacon may be tied to specific geographic locations or relative locations.

In some applications, beacon devices may be used in stores or other retail settings to provide advertisements, offers, or product information to nearby consumers. For example, a proximity beacon may be mounted near a shelf containing products. When a user device nearby is running a particular mobile application, the beacon device emits information to the user device. In some cases, the information provides the price of the product or offers a discount on the product. In some cases, the information provides the identity and/or location of the beacon device, which triggers the mobile application to retrieve and provide promotional information or a discount for the product. Favorable offers may be given for customers who are present during particularly sought after sale times such as in the morning hours of a shopping holiday (e.g., Black Friday).

In some instances, certain users may desire to be physically present in multiple stores at the same time to take advantage of the discounts. For example, someone may desire purchase as many products as possible at deep discount in order to resale the products at a profit. It may be possible to record the wireless signal in order to spoof, or rebroadcast the wireless signal in an unauthorized location or time, one or more of the beacon devices.

The following embodiments providing security algorithms for the beacon devices that prevent spoofing or rebroadcasts of the wireless signals at unauthorized locations or times. The security algorithms may include variable passwords that change over time. Even without bidirectional communication between the beacon device and the mobile device, the variable passwords follow a predictable sequence (e.g., time based or transaction based) that is only known to the beacon devices and the mobile application.

FIG. 1 illustrates an example system for operating a proximity beacon. The system includes a proximity beacon **102**, a mobile device **104**, and a network **106** connected to a server **108**. Additional, different, or fewer components may be included. For example, multiple mobile devices and/or proximity beacons may be included.

The proximity beacon **102** is configured to transmit a beacon signal. The beacon signal may be a radio frequency (RF) signal at a predetermined frequency. The predeter-

mined frequency may be one or more channels in the range of 2.0 GHz to 2.5 GHz. The beacon signal may be transmitted in one or more channels having a specific width (e.g., 1 MHz or 2 MHz). The beacon signal may be transmitted using Gaussian frequency shift modulation. The beacon signal may have a predetermined bit rate (e.g., 1 Mbit/s), and a maximum transmit power (e.g., 10 mW).

The frequency may depend on a configuration setting. The selected frequency may be based on country or another jurisdiction. The frequency may be selected to avoid interference in the radio spectrum. The beacon signal may also be adjusted in power according to a configuration setting. A high power setting may be selected to increase the distance range of the proximity beacon **102**. A low power setting may be selected to conserve power or battery life. The beacon signal may also be adjusted in rate or cycle. That is the interval at which the proximity beacon **102** emits the beacon signal may be adjusted according to a configuration setting. A low repeat rate conserves power, and a high repeat rate increases the likelihood that the mobile device **104** receives the beacon signal. For example, if the mobile device **104** is moving, the mobile device **104** may enter and leave the range of the proximity beacon between beacon signals. Any of the configuration settings may be made directly to the proximity beacon **102** (e.g., dip switches or button) or through a connection with an administrative device. The proximity beacon **102** may include a port (e.g., universal serial bus or another serial bus) for connecting the administrative device to the proximity beacon **102** in order to transmit the configuration settings to the proximity beacon **102**.

The beacon signal may be encoded with one or more identifiers. The identifiers may include a universally unique identifier (UUID). The UUID may be a 16 bit to 128 bit number or hexadecimal sequence. The UUID may be partially formed of a serial number for the proximity beacon **102**. The UUID may also indicate the manufacturer of the proximity beacon **102**. In some examples, each proximity beacon may have a different UUID. In others, the proximity beacons in a particular implementation or a particular location may share the same UUID. In addition, or in the alternative the identifiers may include the geographic location of the beacon device **102**.

The identifiers may also include a major code and a minor code. The major code and minor code may include one or more alphanumeric characters encoded in the beacon signal. For example, the characters may be pulse width modulated to form the beacon signal. The major code may designate a first subset of a deployment of proximity beacons. The major code may be used in multiple proximity beacons in a portion of a venue. For example, the major code may be used in proximity beacons in a particular department or aisle of a store. The minor code may designate a second subset of the deployment of proximity beacons. The minor code may be used for individual proximity beacons or a smaller group of proximity beacons than the major code. For example, the minor code may be specific to a particular product or shelf in the store. The major code and/or minor code may be non-unique identifiers. That is, the major and minor codes may have a number of bits that is less than the UUID. In one example, the major and minor codes may comprise eight bits. The major and minor codes may only be distinguishable from the other major and minor codes in the deployment.

The proximity beacon **102** may include a dip switch, dial, or other input device for adjusting the major code and/or the minor code. Alternatively, the major code and/or minor code

may be programmed using the administrative device in communication with the proximity beacon **102**.

The mobile device **104** receives the beacon signal from the beacon device **102**. The mobile device **104** includes a transceiver configured to communicate using the predetermined frequency of the beacon signal. The mobile device **104** may be configured to convert a pulse width modulated signal to digital data. The data may include any of the identifiers (e.g., unique identifier, major identifier, and minor identifier).

The data may include a security code or a beacon authentication value. The beacon authentication value may be calculated by the proximity beacon **102** using a security algorithm. The beacon authentication value may be a transient value or a temporary value that changes incrementally. The beacon authentication value may begin at an initial value or seed value. The change in the beacon authentication value may be based on time. For example, every predetermined time period, the beacon authentication value may increment to the next value in a series of values. The beacon authentication value may increment in response to the predetermined time period passing according to a system clock. For example, when the predetermined time period is five minutes, the beacon authentication value initially has value V1, increments to value V2 after five minutes have passed, increments to value V3 after ten minutes have passed, and so on. The beacon authentication value may increment sequentially regardless of time. For example, the beacon authentication value may increment for each instance that the beacon authentication value is accessed. That is, the first time the beacon authentication value is accessed, the value is V1. When the beacon authentication value is accessed again, the value increments to V2.

In response to receipt of the beacon signal, the mobile device **104** generates a service request and transmits the service request to the server **108**. The service request includes the beacon authentication value determined by the proximity beacon **102**. The server **108** performs a calculation similar to that of the proximity beacon **103** using a security algorithm to generate a local verification value that matches the beacon authentication value. In some examples, the local verification value increments based on time. The proximity beacon **102** and the server **108** may include clocks that are synchronized. In other examples, the local verification value increments for each usage. The local verification value should increment at the same interval that the beacon authentication value increments.

The server **108** calculates the local verification value and compares the local verification value to the beacon authentication value received in the service request from the mobile device **104**. The server **108** performs a comparison of the authentication value to the local verification value. The server **108** determines whether the local verification value matches the beacon authentication value. In some instances, the server **108** determines whether there is an exact match between the local verification value and the beacon authentication value. The server **108** may determine whether there is a partial match between the local verification value and the beacon authentication value. For example, the server **108** may determine whether a predetermined number or a predetermined percentage. For example, the server **108** may determine whether a number (e.g., 3, 5, 10, or another number) of the alphanumeric characters of the local verification value match the beacon authentication value, or the server **108** may determine whether a percentage (e.g., 50%,

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80%, or another percentage) of the alphanumeric characters of the local verification value match the beacon authentication value.

In addition or in the alternative, the beacon authentication value and the local verification value may be encrypted. Various encryption techniques may be used such as public and private key encryption, a cryptographic hash function, or a key exchange.

The beacon authentication value and the local verification value may be one-time passwords. The one time password may follow a predetermined pattern but also includes an element of randomness or pseudo randomness. For example, with a time synchronized one time password may be based on a security token hardware that is included in the proximity beacon **102** and also included at the server **108**.

Alternatively, the one-time password may also be partially based on a past password. For example, first, a seed value or starting value is selected. Second, a hash function is applied repeatedly (e.g., 100 or 1000 times) to the seed value. A hash function $f(\)$ applied to seed value s may be described as $f(s)$, and applied one hundred times as $f_{100}(s)$. The passwords may be replied in reverse order. Thus, first $f_{100}(s)$ is used, then $f_{99}(s)$, and so on.

When the local verification value and the beacon authentication value match exactly, based on the predetermined number of alphanumeric characters, or based on the predetermined percentage of alphanumeric characters, the server **108** determines that the mobile device **104** is actually geographically near the proximity beacon **102**. In response, the server **108** may provide a location service based on the comparison being a match (e.g., substantial match). That is, the server **108** may release data to the mobile device **104** in response to the match. Alternatively, the server **108** may generate a confirmation message to the mobile device **104** that informs the mobile device **104** that the proximity beacon **102** is actually nearby. In response, the mobile device **104** may provide the location service. The server **108** may generate a spoof warning when the comparison is not a match (e.g., not a substantial match).

The network **106** may connect the mobile device **104** to the Internet or one or more servers **108**. The server **108** may provide information to the mobile device **104** in response to the mobile device **104** matching the local verification value and the beacon authentication value. The mobile device **104** may request the information based on matching the local verification value and the beacon authentication value. The mobile device **104** may send the UUID, major code, or minor code to the server **108**, and the server **108** may query a lookup table to match the proximity beacon **102** with information.

The information may include promotional information for a good or service provided near the proximity beacon **102**. The information may include a time-dependent discount for the good or service. The information may describe the good or service. For example, a shoe store may include proximity beacons for selected varieties of shoes. Once the mobile device **104** forwards the identifiers to the server **108**, which returns information for those shoes.

FIGS. 2, 3 and 4 illustrate an example proximity beacon **102**. The proximity beacon **102** comprises a casing **111**, a circuit board **113**, a battery **115**, and a support mount **117**. Additional, different or fewer components may be included.

The casing **111** may be formed of plastic, or any other material permeable to radio signals, and take a variety of shapes. As shown in FIG. 2, the casing **111** may have a curved surface or egg-shaped. As shown in FIG. 3, the casing **111** may be multi-faceted with multiple polygonal

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faces. As shown in FIG. 4, the casing **111** may be a rectangular prism. The casing may include a latching mechanism for attaching and removing the support mount.

The circuit board **113** may include a processor, a memory, and communication circuitry mounted on and electrically coupled to a printed circuit board. The memory may store one or more of the identifiers such as the UUID, the major code, and the minor code. The processor may encrypt and encode the identifiers into the beacon signal, which is transmitted using the communication circuitry.

The battery **115** may be coin battery shaped as a disc. The battery **115** may have a lifetime of a month, a year, or more. The battery **115** may rechargeable. The battery **115** may be held in place by latching the casing **111** to the support mount **117**.

As shown in FIG. 3, the casing **111** may include an indicator **112**. The indicator **112** may be a light emitting diode (LED) or another type of light that is lit by the processor and the battery **115**. The indicator **112** may be lit in response to power being supplied to the processor from the battery **115**. The indicator may be lit to indicate when the communication circuitry is transmitting. In other examples, the indicator **112** may include multiple lights or a single light that emits multiple colors. One color may indicate power and functioning normal, another color may indicate an error has occurred, and a third color may indicate that the battery **115** is low.

As shown in FIG. 4, the casing **111** may include one or more controls such as a dial **114** and a power switch **116**. The dial **114** may have multiple settings for the identifiers that are transmitted by the communication circuitry. One or more of the dial settings may include a scheme for providing the UUID, major codes, and minor codes. For example, each dial setting '1', '2' and so on may be a different UUID. In addition, or in the alternative, each dial setting may correspond to a major code or a minor code. In one example, each of the dial settings '0' to '10' corresponds to a combination of an UUID, a major code, and a minor code. The dial **114** may be electrically connected to a variable resistor that regulates an input to control logic connected to the processor. The power switch **116** may turn to proximity beacon **102** on or off by connecting or disconnecting the battery **115**. A port **118** may also be included in the alternative or in addition to the manual control inputs.

FIG. 5 illustrates an example retail setting for proximity beacons. The retail setting includes multiple aisles and multiple shelves within each aisle. The shelves hold various products. Proximity beacons may be attached to a shelf, as shown by proximity beacon **102b**. Proximity beacons may be attached a standalone display unit, as shown by proximity beacon **102a**. Proximity beacons may be attached to individual products, as shown by proximity beacon **102c**, placed in either on the shelves or on the standalone display unit.

When a user enters the retail setting with the mobile device **104**, the mobile device **104** may detect one or more proximity beacons nearby. The mobile device **104** may display a list of the available proximity beacons (e.g., beacons **102a-c**) either by identifier or by associated product. For example, the mobile device **104** may display a list including multiple product names either by generic descriptors or by brand. Prices and/or promotional discounts may be displayed on the list.

FIG. 6 illustrates an example floor plan **120** for proximity beacons. The floor plan **120** may correspond to a building, a school, a mall, an underground shopping area, an outdoor shopping area, or another floor plan. For illustrative purposes, various room are depicted on floor plan **120** include

rooms A1-A7, B1-4, and C1-3. The rooms may be retail outlets. Proximity beacons **102e-f** may be strategically placed in areas near the retail outlets. Each of the proximity beacons **102e-f** is associated with a broadcast area or broadcast range **121**. In some examples, the broadcast ranges **121** may overlap, as shown by overlapping range **123**. The broadcast ranges **121** may have different sizes. Examples diameters for the broadcast range **121** include 10 meters, 25 meters, 50 meters, and 100 meters. In some examples, as illustrated for proximity beacon **102e**, an extended range **122** may be available according to a user input. The extended range may be available because of a higher power setting for the transmitter.

FIG. 7 illustrates an example network for proximity beacons. In this example, multiple mobile devices **156a-c** are in communication with network **110** and server **125**. Only beacon device **152** is shown, but multiple beacon devices may be used. Additional, different, or fewer components may be included.

The beacon device **152** receives a seed value **150** through one way communication channel **151**. The seed value **150** may be received through a physical connection (e.g., a USB port or another serial connection) made with a programming device (e.g., a laptop or tablet computer). The seed value **150** may correspond to a current system time of the programming device or a network to which the programming device is connected. For example, the seed value **150** may be the current time in minutes concatenated with a random number. The seed value **150** may be determined in response to a connection of the communication channel **151** or powering up the beacon device **152**. The beacon device **152** may increment the seed value in a variety of techniques. In one example, the seed value **150** may be incremented by a value n every predetermined amount of time. Examples for n include 1, 2, 10, or any value. Examples, for the predetermined amount of time include 1 second, 10 seconds, 1 minute, and 10 minutes. The administrator may select the predetermined amount of time as a security setting. That is, the smaller the time increment, the more secure the system is to spoofing.

The seed value **150** may also be communication to the network **110** and/or server **125** via the communication path **157**. The communication path **157** may be a wireless connection such as WiFi or the family of protocols known as 802.111 or a cellular connection. The server **125** may store the seed value and increment the seed value in unison with the beacon device **152**. In other words, a counting or increment algorithm is executing by the beacon device **152** and the server **125** in order to implement a one-time password. The beacon device **152** sends the incremented seed value through one way communication path **153** to the mobile device **156a**, which forwards the incremented seed value to the server through communication path **155**. The server **125** is configured to authenticate or match the beacon device **152** by comparing the version incremented by the server **125** and the version received from the mobile device **156a**. The server **125** may apply a delay or time window or grace period in order to account to the time that has passed for the communication paths **153** and **155**. In other words, the server **125** may match the incremented value received from the mobile device **156a** to a past value or a range of past values incremented at the server. The past value or range of past values may be selected according to the grace period or time window.

Other mobile devices **156b-c** may be in communication with the network **110**. The other mobile devices **156b-c** may be in communication with other beacon devices that may

increment seed value **150** or another seed value. Thus, the server **125** may simultaneously increment multiple seed values and store multiple seed values for multiple beacon devices. Accordingly, mobile devices in communication with multiple beacon devices may store multiple incremented seed values.

Once the incremented seed value have been authenticated. The mobile device **156a** receives content for beacon device **152** from the server **125**. The mobile device **156a** may send an identifier (e.g., any combination of a UUID, a major code, and a minor code) received in the beacon signal from the beacon device **152** to the server **125**. The server receives the identifier and access a lookup table in order to determine the data or file to send to the mobile device **156a**.

FIG. 8 illustrates an example network device **300** (e.g., server **125**) for the prevention of proximity beacon proofing. The network device includes at least a memory **301**, a controller **303**, and a communication interface **305**. The network device **300** may be in communication with database **307**. Additional, different, or fewer components may be provided. Different network devices may have the same or different arrangement of components. FIG. 9 illustrates an example flowchart for the prevention of beacon spoofing using the network device of FIG. 8. Additional, different, or fewer acts may be provided. The acts are performed in the order shown or other orders. The acts may also be repeated.

As described above, the proximity device **102** generates a beacon signal that identifies the proximity device **102** and includes a beacon authentication value determined at the proximity device **102**. A mobile device **104**, such as a smartphone, a laptop computer, or a tablet computer, which extracts from the beacon signal and then relays the beacon authentication value and the identifier for the proximity device **102**. At act S101, the controller **303** or the communication interface **305** receives a beacon authentication value extracted from the beacon signal from the proximity beacon. The communication between the mobile device **104** may be any network connection such as a cellular network or a wireless network.

At S103, the controller **303** calculates a local verification value from a security algorithm. The security algorithm may parallel the generation of the beacon authentication value. The security algorithm may calculate the local verification value from an initial value a clock value received from clock **304**. The security algorithm may include a hash function that repeats every predetermined time interval. The predetermined time interval may be long enough to account for the communication between the proximity beacon **102**, the mobile device **104**, and the network device **300**. Thus, the controller **303** may compare the received beacon authentication value to a current value output from the security algorithm or a previous value generated with the predetermined time period.

At act S105, the controller **303** performs a comparison of the beacon authentication value to the local verification value. The comparison may require an exact match. That is, each character of the beacon authentication value is compared to a corresponding character of the local verification value. In one example, the comparison may only require a subset of characters to match between the beacon authentication value and the local verification value. Examples of the subset may include a percentage such as 60%, 80% or 90% or a specific number of characters. Using the percentage, it is possible for minor transmission error not to disrupt the comparison.

At act S107, the controller **303** and the communication interface **305** provide a location service based on the com-

parison. The controller **303** may identify a unique identifier for the proximity beacon from the beacon signal, and the location service is based on the unique identifier. In one implementation the unique identifier describes a retail outlet or a portion of the retail outlet. When the comparison shows that there is not a match, the controller **303** may generate a spoof warning. The spoof warning include the identifier for the proximity beacon **102**. The communication interface **305** may be sent to the administrator of the deployment of the beacons. In response to the spoof warning, the administrator may disable the proximity beacon **102**. In one example, the controller **303** removes the identifiers for the proximity beacon that has been spoofed so that no future location services are applied for that proximity beacon. In another example, a service technician may be deployed to change the identifiers of the spoofed proximity beacon.

FIG. **10** illustrates an example endpoint device for preventing spoofing in communication with one or more proximity beacons. The endpoint device **210** may include a controller **200**, a memory **201**, a sensor **202**, an input device **203**, a sensor **204**, a communication interface **211** and a display **205**. Additional, different, or fewer components may be provided. Different network devices may have the same or different arrangement of components. FIG. **11** illustrates an example flowchart using the endpoint device **210** of FIG. **10**. Additional, different, or fewer acts may be included.

At act **S201**, the communication interface **211** receives a beacon signal from a beacon (e.g., proximity beacon **102** or beacon device **152**). At act **S203**, the controller **200** identifies a beacon authentication value from the beacon signal. The controller **200** may identify a non-unique identifier for the beacon device from the beacon signal. The non-unique identifier may describe the location of the beacon. In one example, the non-unique identifier describes two levels of location. One level may be a large area (e.g., a store) and another level may be a particular portion of the large area (e.g., an aisle or shelf). Thus, the non-unique identifier may include a first value indicative of a first area and a second value indicative of a second area, such that the second area is a subset of the first area. The receipt of the beacon signal or identifiers for the beacon may be shown on display **205**.

At act **S205**, the controller **200** calculates a local verification value from a security algorithm that matches the algorithm performed by the beacon. The security algorithm may be any of the examples described herein. At act **S207**, the controller **200** compares the authentication value to the local verification value. Thus, the authentication is performed by the endpoint device **210**.

In one alternative, the sensor **104** may determine a location of the endpoint device **120**. The sensor **104** may be a global positioning system (GPS) sensor or an inertial sensor for determining the geographic location of the endpoint device **210**. The controller **200** may match the location of the endpoint device **210** with the location of the beacon to provide another level of authentication that the beacon is not being spoofed.

At act **S209**, the controller **200** provides a location service based on the comparison. The location service may information shown on display **205** that is interactive through input device **203**. In some examples, the user requests the service via input device **203** and in others it is automatically pushed to the user upon authentication. The information from the location service may be stored memory **201** and unlocked in response to authentication (e.g., act **S207**). Alternatively, the endpoint device **210** may request the information for the location server from a server (e.g., network device **300** or server **125**) in response to the

authentication, which sends the information to the endpoint device **210**. When the comparison shows that the beacon is not authenticated, the controller **200** may generate a spoof warning which is sent to an administrator (e.g., network device **300** or server **125**).

In one alternative, the endpoint device **210** may provide information to an external device in response to the authentication. For example, the endpoint device **210** may provide demographic information or shopping preferences to the retailer. Thus, the proximity beacon may include an address, and the endpoint device **210** provides metadata to the address.

In one alternative, the endpoint device **210** may provide a game or puzzle to the user. For example, the beacon may be located near a queue or a line that forms in a store. In response to authentication this beacon, the endpoint **210** access an application as a distraction for the user.

In one alternative, the beacon is associated with a museum, art gallery, or historical site. The beacon signal includes a uniform resource locator (URL). The endpoint device **210** may visit the URL in order to download additional information for the exhibit in the museum, the artwork in the gallery, or the feature in the historical site. A series of beacons may be used to provide a self-guided tour.

Herein, the phrase “coupled with” is defined to mean directly connected to or indirectly connected through one or more intermediate components. Such intermediate components may include both hardware and software based components. Further, to clarify the use in the pending claims and to hereby provide notice to the public, the phrases “at least one of <A>, , . . . and <N>” or “at least one of <A>, , . . . <N>, or combinations thereof” are defined by the Applicant in the broadest sense, superseding any other implied definitions heretofore or hereinafter unless expressly asserted by the Applicant to the contrary, to mean one or more elements selected from the group comprising A, B, . . . and N, that is to say, any combination of one or more of the elements A, B, . . . or N including any one element alone or in combination with one or more of the other elements which may also include, in combination, additional elements not listed.

The input device **203** may be one or more buttons, keypad, keyboard, mouse, stylist pen, trackball, rocker switch, touch pad, voice recognition circuit, or other device or component for inputting data to the endpoint **103**. The input device **203** and the display **205** may be combined as a touch screen, which may be capacitive or resistive. The display **205** may be a liquid crystal display (LCD) panel, light emitting diode (LED) screen, thin film transistor screen, or another type of display.

The controllers **200** and **303** may include a general processor, digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), field programmable gate array (FPGA), analog **130** circuit, digital circuit, combinations thereof, or other now known or later developed processor. The controller **303** may be a single device or combinations of devices, such as associated with a network, distributed processing, or cloud computing.

The memories **201** and **301** may be a volatile memory or a non-volatile memory. The memory **301** may include one or more of a read only memory (ROM), random access memory (RAM), a flash memory, an electronic erasable program read only memory (EEPROM), or other type of memory. The memory **301** may be removable from the network device **103**, such as a secure digital (SD) memory card.

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In addition to ingress ports and egress ports, the communication interface may include any operable connection. An operable connection may be one in which signals, physical communications, and/or logical communications may be sent and/or received. An operable connection may include a physical interface, an electrical interface, and/or a data interface.

The memories **201** and **301** are non-transitory computer-readable media, which may be a single medium or multiple media, such as a centralized or distributed database, and/or associated caches and servers that store one or more sets of instructions. The term “computer-readable medium” shall also include any medium that is capable of storing, encoding or carrying a set of instructions for execution by a processor or that cause a computer system to perform any one or more of the methods or operations disclosed herein. The computer readable medium may be non-transitory, which includes all tangible computer-readable media.

In an alternative embodiment, dedicated hardware implementations, such as application specific integrated circuits, programmable logic arrays and other hardware devices, can be constructed to implement one or more of the methods described herein. Applications that may include the apparatus and systems of various embodiments can broadly include a variety of electronic and computer systems. One or more embodiments described herein may implement functions using two or more specific interconnected hardware modules or devices with related control and data signals that can be communicated between and through the modules, or as portions of an application-specific integrated circuit. Accordingly, the present system encompasses software, firmware, and hardware implementations.

Although the present specification describes components and functions that may be implemented in particular embodiments with reference to particular standards and protocols, the invention is not limited to such standards and protocols. For example, standards for Internet and other packet switched network transmission (e.g., TCP/IP, UDP/IP, HTML, HTTP, HTTPS) represent examples of the state of the art. Such standards are periodically superseded by faster or more efficient equivalents having essentially the same functions. Accordingly, replacement standards and protocols having the same or similar functions as those disclosed herein are considered equivalents thereof.

A computer program (also known as a program, software, software application, script, or code) can be written in any form of programming language, including compiled or interpreted languages, and it can be deployed in any form, including as a standalone program or as a module, component, subroutine, or other unit suitable for use in a computing environment. A computer program does not necessarily correspond to a file in a file system. A program can be stored in a portion of a file that holds other programs or data (e.g., one or more scripts stored in a markup language document), in a single file dedicated to the program in question, or in multiple coordinated files (e.g., files that store one or more modules, sub programs, or portions of code). A computer program can be deployed to be executed on one computer or on multiple computers that are located at one site or distributed across multiple sites and interconnected by a communication network.

It is intended that the foregoing detailed description be regarded as illustrative rather than limiting and that it is understood that the following claims including all equivalents are intended to define the scope of the invention. The claims should not be read as limited to the described order or elements unless stated to that effect. Therefore, all

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embodiments that come within the scope and spirit of the following claims and equivalents thereto are claimed as the invention.

We claim:

1. A method comprising:
 - at a server configured to communicate with a mobile device over a network:
 - receiving, from the mobile device, information derived by the mobile device from a proximity beacon signal transmitted to the mobile device by a beacon device, the information including: a unique identifier representing a serial number of the beacon device; non-unique identifiers including a major code indicative of a first location area and a minor code indicative of a second location area that is a subset of the first location area; and a beacon authentication value that increments from an initial seed value based on time according to a security algorithm;
 - incrementing a local verification value from the initial seed value based on a clock according to the security algorithm;
 - performing a comparison of the beacon authentication value to a past incremented local verification value, instead of a current incremented local verification value, to account for time delays caused by transmission of the proximity beacon signal to the beacon device and transmission of the information from the mobile device to the server;
 - if the comparison indicates a match, providing access to a location service based on at least one of the unique identifier and the non-unique identifiers, and providing the location service to the mobile device based on the comparison; and
 - if the comparison does not indicate a match, removing the unique identifier received so that no location service is applied in the future for the beacon device.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the location service is based on the unique identifier.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the beacon authentication value is a one-time password.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the local verification value increments sequentially.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the initial seed value is applied to the beacon device through a serial interface.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the local verification value and the beacon authentication value each include time values.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the location service is based on the non-unique identifiers.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the first location area corresponds to a retail outlet and the second location area corresponds to a shelf or aisle in the retail outlet.
9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - generating a spoof warning when the comparison indicates the beacon authentication value is different than the past incremented local verification value.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein the incrementing includes repeatedly applying a hash function to the seed value at periodic time intervals.
11. An apparatus comprising:
 - a processor; and
 - a memory comprising one or more instructions executable by the processor to perform:
 - receiving, from a mobile device, information derived by the mobile device from a proximity beacon signal

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transmitted to the mobile device by a beacon device, the information including: a unique identifier representing a serial number of the beacon device; a major code indicative of a first location area, and a minor code indicative of a second location area that is a subset of the first location area; and a beacon authentication value that increments from an initial seed value based on time according to a security algorithm;

5 incrementing a local verification value from the initial seed value based on a clock according to the security algorithm;

10 performing a comparison of the beacon authentication value to a past incremented local verification value, instead of a current incremented local verification value, to account for time delays caused by transmission of the proximity beacon signal to the beacon device and transmission of the information from the mobile device to the server;

15 if the comparison indicates a match, providing access to a location service based on at least one of the unique identifier and the non-unique identifiers, and providing the location service to the mobile device based on the comparison; and

20 if the comparison does not indicate a match, removing the unique identifier received so that no location service is applied in the future for the beacon device.

25 **12.** The apparatus of claim **11**, wherein the location service is based on the unique identifier.

13. The apparatus of claim **12**, wherein the major code corresponds to a retail outlet and the minor code corresponds to an aisle or shelf in the retail outlet.

14. The apparatus of claim **12**, wherein the unique identifier is set by a manual dial or switch on the beacon device.

15. The apparatus of claim **11**, wherein the beacon authentication value is a one-time password.

16. The apparatus of claim **11**, wherein the initial seed value is applied to the beacon device through a communication interface.

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17. A non-transitory computer readable medium including instructions that when executed are configured to cause a processor of a server to communicate with a mobile device over a network to perform:

receiving, from the mobile device, information derived by the mobile device from a proximity beacon signal transmitted to the mobile device by a beacon device, the information including: a unique identifier representing a serial number of the beacon device; a major code indicative of a first location area, and a minor code indicative of a second location area that is a subset of the first location area; and a beacon authentication value that increments from an initial seed value based on time according to a security algorithm;

incrementing a local verification value from the initial seed value based on a clock according to the security algorithm;

performing a comparison of the beacon authentication value to a past incremented local verification value, instead of a current incremented local verification value, to account for time delays caused by transmission of the proximity beacon signal to the beacon device and transmission of the information from the mobile device to the server;

if the comparison indicates a match, providing access to a location service based on at least one of the unique identifier and the non-unique identifiers, and providing the location service to the mobile device based on the comparison; and

if the comparison does not indicate a match, removing the unique identifier received so that no location service is applied in the future for the beacon device.

18. The non-transitory computer readable medium of claim **17**, wherein the location service is based on the unique identifier.

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